

Maintaining Christian Friendships

A Guide for Young and New Christians

Developing a new chapter in your walk as a Christian is a wonderful experience; however, there are many things that come along with this experience especially when it comes to developing and maintaining friendships based on your faith. Finding people who are also Christians and will encourage your spiritual development and share your values is important. However, how do you create and develop long-term friendships that honor God and provide mutual support?

This article will provide you with practical and biblical ways to develop and sustain Christian friendships. We will discuss how to communicate with your Christian friends effectively, how to resolve conflicts that arise, how to create opportunities to spend time with each other through shared activities, and how to encourage each other spiritually. This guide will help you to build lasting friendships that will help to grow your faith.

Why Are Christian Friendships Important?

While all types of friendships are important, Christian friendships are special because they offer an additional level of support and encouragement. Proverbs 27:17 states, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens the heart of his friend” (NIV). When you have Christian friends who share your spiritual journey, you will be encouraged to remain strong in your faith, you will have others to whom you can be accountable, and you will find support during difficult times. Research has shown that friendships such as those mentioned above can lead to positive outcomes. For example, research conducted by the Barna Group in 2022 found that Christians who regularly participate in their community and fellowship with other believers tend to report higher levels of happiness, spiritual growth, and resilience than those who do not.

Establishing a Strong Base: The Steps Necessary to Develop Strong Christian Friendships

Before discussing how to maintain friendships, I would like to briefly review the steps necessary to develop them:

Be Real and Open

Authenticity creates opportunity for deepening a relationship. Be willing to share your life, including your struggles and your successes.

Join Church and Community Groups

Bible Study groups, volunteer teams, and youth ministry teams are all great opportunities to meet individuals who share similar values.

Pray Together

When you pray with and for one another, you create spiritual intimacy.

Practical Strategies: Ways to Sustain Your Christian Friendship Over Time

Develop Consistent Communication

Regardless of the busyness of life, consistent communication is essential to sustaining any friendship. No matter whether you send a brief message to check-in, make a phone call, or meet up for coffee, consistency is key.

Take Actionable Insight: Establish reminders for regular check-ins or prayer time with your Christian friends. Utilize tools such as group chat, video calling, etc., when meeting in person may not be feasible.

Promote Mutual Support and Accountability

Christian friendships are developed when friends support and encourage one another to follow biblical principles. Examples of this type of encouragement include sharing uplifting scripture, celebrating each other's success, and encouraging one another in times of need.

Use Example: You and your Christian friend agree to support and hold each other accountable in various aspects of your life such as praying daily for each other and/or praying about specific areas you struggle with.

Developing A Relationship With God and Others

As believers, we should strive to develop a relationship with God and with others. Developing a relationship with God means developing a love for Him, His Word, and His people. Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV) says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself." In order to develop a relationship with God, we need to know Him. We can get to know God through His word, prayer, and spending time with His people. The Bible teaches that Jesus said, "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). As believers, we should also be developing a relationship with others. A relationship is built by spending time with someone, sharing things with one another, and being available for one another. Relationships are built on a foundation of mutual trust, respect, and loyalty. Galatians 6:2 (NIV) states, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

A Good Friendship

The Bible encourages good friendships. Proverbs 27:9 (NKJV) states, "Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from their earnest counsel." The Bible

emphasizes the importance of good friends because they help us to become better people. When we surround ourselves with good friends, they encourage us to stay true to God's values. They help us to make wise decisions and hold us accountable to follow God's plan for our lives. Ultimately, the Bible teaches that the greatest reward of having good friends is having them to rejoice with during times of triumph and to comfort during times of sorrow. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV) states, "Two are better than one, because together they can achieve more than the strongest single person. For if either of them falls down, the other can help him up. But remember that even one alone, if he has a vantage point over the woodwork, can fall into a pit and cannot get out of it. Again, if two lie down together, they will be warm; but a single person can't keep warm. And though one may be able to overpower another, two together can stand against one. A cord of three strands is not easily broken."

Being a Good Friend

Being a good friend takes effort and commitment. According to Proverbs 19:17 (KJV), "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given He shall pay again." Being a good friend involves putting the needs of others first and being willing to go the extra mile to show them that you care. It involves listening to others when they need to talk and helping others when they need assistance. Proverbs 13:10 (NLT) states, "Wealth gives long life; however the poor and needy suffer and die." This verse reminds us that wealth can give us opportunities to live longer, but true happiness comes from building strong relationships with those around us. If we can develop good relationships with those around us, we can find true happiness regardless of whether we are wealthy or poor.

Forgive and Move On

No matter how hard we try, conflicts are bound to arise in friendships. However, as believers, we are called to forgive each other and move forward. Matthew 5:38-42 (NIV) states, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." As believers, we are called to forgive our friends when they wrong us and to continue to treat them with kindness and compassion. Matthew 7:12 (NIV) states, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." We can use these verses as a reminder to respond to conflicts in our friendships with love and compassion instead of anger and bitterness.